

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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PRICE TWOPENCE

ONLY A BUSINESS MAN.

By MAY DRYDEN.

CHAPTER XXX.

GORDON gave himself no time for reflection, but proceeded at once to put into action the resolution to which he and Phoebe had come, for, though neither of them had put it into words, both of them knew very well what it was.

To both it seemed that the only upright and honourable course that remained to Gordon, was for him to ask Deborah to be his wife. That she loved him neither could doubt, and a woman's love is, in itself, a claim on a man's generosity. She had saved his life; it seemed to him that, for that reason, it now belonged in some degree to her. But the strongest, and, indeed, the only sufficient ground for the action he intended to take was the slur which, by her innocent devotion to him, had been cast upon her name, and which, it seemed to him, nothing else would wipe away. That she was in a different rank of life from himself only made it more binding upon him to vindicate her honour as fully as possible. So it seemed to him. And, in reality, she was not his inferior except in point of wealth. Had she been coarse, common, vulgar, or even such an one as her sister Minnie, whose only recommendations were beauty and a gentle, womanly heart, nothing would have induced him to marry her.

But Deborah was a high-souled, large-hearted, large-minded woman, noble in aim, pure in impulse, possessed of true refinement, a fairly good education, and, what was better than any education, the will and the power to acquire knowledge for its own sake.

That such a woman should suffer on his

account seemed to him terrible—a thing not to be permitted, while he could in any way hinder it. Therefore he made up his mind to propose for her openly, letting who would know of his so doing, and making his purpose known first to her father and mother.

If she married him, he could take care that no one handled her name lightly. If she declined to accept his proposal, her doing so would in itself be sufficient disproof of the wicked scandal which had been set on foot.

It had not, however, really entered into his head that she would refuse him; to Phoebe that seemed, not unnaturally, an almost impossible contingency.

Gordon never expected that things would turn out well for him. He was always prone to look on the darkest side of things, and, taking his life very hardly, suffered almost as much in anticipation of evil as in evil itself.

He went home after leaving Phoebe and spent an hour very quietly with Clarence, speaking with her gently and affectionately about Luke and her own plans, telling her how pleased he was to have so fine a fellow for his brother-in-law, and how he meant to bring about their marriage as soon as possible. He even took an interest in all she could tell him of the unfortunate Dick and his doings.

About dusk, when he knew that the lads and lasses would be returning from their Saturday afternoon rambles, and that many of them would be sure to see him, he walked slowly down to the Hollow and knocked at Isaac Leighton's cottage-door.

Isaac himself opened it to him and bade him enter, not over cordially. He thought it inconsiderate and careless, to say the least of it, in Gordon to have come there at all after what he must know had been

said, and especially to have come at that time. No suspicion of the young man's real purpose entered his mind, and his irritation accordingly found vent in words.

"Be yo' ignorant what is sayin' abeaunt yo' and eawr Debby, Measter Fenchurch, that yo'n come neaw when all th' idlers i' th' neebourhood con see yo' to mak' more talk o' th' poor lass?"

"I come now on purpose," said Gordon quietly, "that as many people might see me as possible, and that you might tell them, when they mention the matter, what I came for."

"I don't understand yo', sir. What have yo' come for?"

Gordon paused a moment, not hesitating, but considering how best to frame his speech, so as to be exactly true to himself, yet respectful to Deborah and her father. Then he said simply:

"I have come to ask you if you will give me Deborah to be my wife. Stop a moment, Mr. Leighton," he went on as Isaac was about to answer him; "you must not think for a moment that I imagine that I am condescending to your daughter in asking her to marry me. I will not deny to you that my reason for doing so is that I may show, as fully as man can show, my respect for her. But, do believe me, I know very well how good and true she is—a woman whom any man, were he the finest gentleman in the land, might be proud to have for a wife. On my honour, if you will trust her to me, I will do my very best to make her happy."

"I doubt yo' couldna' do it, sir," said Isaac very gravely. "Not if yo' wur to kill yo' resel' i' tryin'. Have yo' yet to learn that theer is a sort o' woman that asks fur nowt less in a husband than love? Aw know theer's nowt con stop th' heart clemming of them save that—nother respect, nor kindness, nor plenty of money. Eawr Deborah is one of that sort. Aw believe yo're doin' yo're best, sir; but it wonna' do, and try so how yo' will, yo' conna better it. Moreover, loike should wed w' loike. Deborah hersel' will say so. But that is fur her to decide. Anyway, aw thank yo', sir."

There was a break in Leighton's voice as he put his hand in Gordon's as he finished speaking. There was a moment's silence, then, turning to his wife, he bade her go and bring Deborah if she felt well enough to see the master. The good woman, who had been listening, overcome with pride and astonishment, obeyed without saying a word.

In a minute or two Deborah came, and her father, placing her tenderly in a great cushioned elbow-chair by the hearth, said to Gordon:

"Sir, yo'll mind that th' lass is far from strong, and donnot bide too long."

"I will be very careful," said Gordon; and so Isaac and his wife went away and left him alone with Deborah.

He stood before her, leaning with one shoulder against the high mantelpiece, his hands loosely clasped behind him.

She was the first to break the silence.

"You are very good to come and see me," said she.

"No; I should have been before if it would have been any use. You have a right to anything I can do for you."

"You look very ill, sir," said she pityingly.

"Not so ill as you, I think, Deborah; you have had a great deal of suffering on my account. I have never thanked you."

"There is no need. I have more pleasure than pain. Indeed, I am very content."

He looked at her wonderingly as she lay back in her chair, a thoughtful smile on her lips, a dreamy look of pleasure in her eyes. It struck him as strangely incongruous that anyone should be content when he was so unhappy. The feeling in his heart was that of the sad old song, "How can ye sing, ye little birds, and I sae weary, fu' o' care?"—an unreasonable one enough.

"I think you are content," said he. "Is it because you saved my life?"

"Yes; for that and other reasons."

"Deborah, the life you saved is not worth very much; but, such as it is, will you have it?"

"I do not understand you."

"I came here to-night to ask you to marry me. If you will take me for your husband, Deborah, you shall do what you please with my life; we will work together for your ends and aims, and I will do my best to make you happy as long as I live?"

"Oh!"

Deborah clasped her hands on her knee, and leant forward, looking into the fire. They were both so silent that they could hear the crackling of the coal as it burned, and a falling cinder made Gordon start nervously.

"Well?" said he presently.

"Do you know what you are saying?"

"Yes; I am not acting on impulse. I

have thought it out carefully. I mean what I say. It is much the best way."

"No, it is not the best way. I know of what you are thinking. You make a mistake there; I do not care about that. When our people see me about again, they will not doubt me. Your way would not be best for you or me."

"Think again, Deborah. I am very much in earnest."

"Yes, I know. I thank you. You have made me very happy. Yes," she went on dreamily; "I am quite happy. I have saved your life, and you have thought well enough of me to make me your wife."

She rose and came nearer to him, excitement giving her strength.

"God bless you!" said she. "I believe you are the truest gentleman alive. I am a woman, and do you think I have not seen what you are giving up for me? You offer me what would be heaven, if it were my right and I dared to take it. But to live all my life in sight of you—ah, it belongs to someone else! And I, on my own account, dare not take it. You spoke of my work in life; that work I must be true to. The man does not live that I would wed. He must needs be like you, and one of my own class. How could that be? But whatever comes or goes, you and your sister, and your wife that is to be, have made my life happy to me."

She staggered, and would have fallen, but that he caught her in his arms and laid her gently in her chair.

She seized his hand as he stooped over her, and kissed it vehemently, then turned her face away, and murmured:

"Go now—go, and send my mother to me."

There was no need. As he opened the door and went out, they entered. He stepped away into the darkness with a light of joy in his soul which was never more to be put out.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOME—home, to tell Clarence all about it. That was Gordon's first thought as he turned away from the Hollow. Dear Clarence, sweet Clarence, how glad she would be!

"Why," he said, stopping, and speaking aloud, "she will not believe it. I can hardly believe it myself, that things can begin to go right for me."

And then he cried shame upon himself for a selfish fellow, always caring most for

himself; and the great tears came into his eyes with the thoughts of Phoebe, and the delight it would be to see her happy, and her face with the look of care and pain gone from it.

But he could not tell her to-night; he could not control himself to tell her to-night. And yet, must she lie awake and cry in the dark, when there was no need? She did cry at night, sometimes, he knew. She had said so once, apropos of some household trouble, and then had blushed, ashamed to seem to be asking for pity, and turned it off with a laugh, saying she had no time during the day for such nonsense.

He seemed to see her face before him as he turned up the Holme drive, and hurried on and in, with no need to knock, since Clarence stood at the door waiting for him.

So he carried his great joy, as he had carried all his griefs since he knew what grief was, to his sister's heart, and she felt that this was the crown of her care and love for him.

It seemed to him strange, as his joy was strange, to find her able to sympathise with him in it, as she had sympathised in all his sorrows and worries, and he said so.

"You forget, dear," she answered; "just lately I have been learning what joy is, as well as you."

"You are a wonderful woman," said he. "All this week long you have been happy, and you have put your happiness on one side to be unhappy with me. How did you do it?"

"Habit, I suppose, brother mine. Do you think I could be quite happy if you were not so too? Besides, happiness does not spoil with keeping, and women often have to let their own concerns wait. But, take warning, Gordon; I am not going to be unhappy with you any more. I am afraid I have done so rather too much. You must give up being morbid now. Phoebe is as sweet and sensible a little soul as there is in England, and you can just take pattern by her."

"Aye," said he, flinging his head back, as though to throw off all his worldly cares, and looking, in his happiness, as Clarence contentedly noted, younger than he had done for years; "aye, and what shall I do about Phoebe, Clarence? I cannot bear the thought of her being unhappy another night. And still—poor weak fool that I am—I dare not trust myself to go and speak to her to-night. I should break down, and frighten the dear

little woman out of her wits. My poor little grey woman—do you remember, Clarence?"

He rose, and began to stride impatiently about the room.

"I must get the better of this nervousness, Clarence; it is making an old man of me—wearing me out, and it is so weak and womanish."

"Ah!" said Clarence. "Now I should have said, speaking from my experience, that it was mannish. But you are right. You must get rid of it. Whatever you do with yourself, you must not wear Phoebe out; must you?"

"I am afraid I have worn you out many a time, dear lass," said he remorsefully.

"And I am afraid you are talking nonsense, dear lad," replied she affectionately. "Do I look worn out?"

She certainly did not. She looked the very incarnation of life, and health, and happiness.

"Listen!" she continued; "I'll run down to Phoebe myself. It is quite early yet. She shall be made happy to-night, and to-morrow you shall blend your happiness, you two dear, ridiculous young people."

"Thanks. Do go, dear; only come back as quickly as you can."

"Not I. I will send Luke up to keep you company, and you can tell Dick to come presently and bring me home. Phoebe and I shall have a good deal to say to each other."

"Aye, surely. But where is Dick? I have not seen the lad all day."

"He is up to his eyes in paper and ink, and trying to persuade himself that he needs nothing else to make him happy. Now, mind you unbury him, Gordon, and send him for me. Tell him I particularly desired it. He always does what I want him to do."

So away sped Clarence, and in a few minutes was knocking at Mr. Carfield's door, which was opened to her by Luke.

"You!" he exclaimed. "And alone! Is Gordon ill?"

"No; there is nothing wrong," she answered. "Everything is all right; but I want Phoebe, Luke dear."

"Phoebe is lying down upstairs; she has a headache, I believe. You must not stay with her too long, Clarence, or you may make it worse. Come down quickly, and I'll walk home with you."

"No, you won't, sir. You will just go

right up to Gordon as quickly as you can, and keep him company while I cure Phoebe's headache. Do, Luke, and stay there until I come home. Gordon will tell you why. I cannot tell anyone until I've told Phoebe."

Here Phoebe's voice was heard calling to Clarence, and begging her to come up. With a nod and a smile to Luke, she ran upstairs, and Phoebe flung her arms round her, and drew her into her room. Then the poor tired child laid her head on her friend's bosom, and burst into tears, crying so passionately that Clarence's first thought had to be to calm her a little. Presently she looked up, and sobbed out:

"Oh, Clarence, Clarence! I am so tired, and so unhappy, and I have so wanted you!"

"Why, yes, dear, of course; that is just what you have wanted. And here I am, come like a bird of good omen, to predict that everything is going to turn out well after all. Not that birds do predict. Never mind, Phoebe. It is all right."

"All right!"

"Yes; the prince married the princess, and they all lived happily ever afterwards. Silly little woman! did you and Gordon really imagine that Deborah was bound to marry him? No; Deborah is quite another sort of woman from that—the darling."

"Clarence, I never thought it possible. Am I really going to be happy, after all? I never thought it possible."

Before Dick came for his cousin that night, she had convinced Phoebe that it was possible that she should be happy—in fact, left her so happy that it was hardly likely she could have any more doubts on the subject.

Dick came for Clarence in due time, but Matty divined his presence in some mysterious way, and kept carefully out of sight, so that Clarence's kindly intentions on his behalf were frustrated. To her surprise, as they left the house, he said, in a tone of gentle commiseration:

"Never mind, dear."

"Never mind what?" she answered.

"Your plans falling through, my kind cousin. Don't trouble yourself; I do not. I assure you I am quite contented. The fruit is not quite ripe yet. When it is I shall gather it all right. You will see."

"Well," said Clarence, "you are the queerest boy, Dick, I ever saw. I can hardly believe that you are akin to Gordon, you are so free from anxiety."

"Ah, you see, Gordon has monopolised all that commodity that fell to the share of our family. There was none left for me. Good-night, Clarence!"

FLORIDA SKETCHES.

JACKSONVILLE.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

IN the winter-time in Jacksonville, one does not see many of those pests of the insect-world which one instinctively connects with latitude thirty degrees. Mosquitoes are rarities. True, whenever my thermometer approached the seventies after sundown, I was tempted in pursuit of one or more of these villainous inventions of Nature, who were generally dull-headed enough, after giving their buzz of warning, which is surely to them the trumpet of attack, to settle full on the whitewashed ceiling, which threw them into a relief that was speedily fatal to them. But in the daytime they are out of sight and hearing. Ants are, perhaps, more annoying. There are the big ants and the little ones—the big ones with three very decided parts to each body, and furnished with nippers of much keenness, who make no scruple about climbing the legs of your dinner-table, one after the other, and coming with mathematical directness, and a precision smacking of the drill-sergeant, towards you and your plate. Nor are they easily discomfited, Hoping to divert the rest from their attention to my dinner, I have now and again killed one of these large fellows and civilly put the carcass in the way of the others, relying on their goodness of nature and sympathetic dispositions not to give their dead comrade the cold shoulder; but, so far from one dead ant serving to make them forget my plate in their eagerness to carry off the body and pay all due funereal honours to it, to me it seemed that the defunct was so much additional incitement to the rest to make haste forward. Those that noticed the body approached it gingerly, touched it with their antennæ, and then set off again in a scamper, as though anxious to forget so dolorous a subject as death. Now and then I dined in a little restaurant where these ants were peculiarly plentiful, so that I deemed it prudent to set my legs on a chair during the meal, and keep a very sharp eye on all the approaches to the different plates which held my dinner. Once I drew the attention of the little black bare-legged girl who

waited on me to the creatures, asking her with some severity whence they came. "Oh, they bite, they do!" said she, pausing, with her mouth and eyes wide open, to watch their progress along the chequered tablecloth; and then with a shiver, she caught hold of her scanty skirts and marched out on her toes. A minute later in came the mistress of the establishment, a full-blown "yellow" lady, of well-mellowed personal charms, and, after a hasty apology, she seized the nearest dinner-knife, and with a harsh ejaculation, "Oh, the dem nasty things!" began smashing the unfortunate ants, one after the other, with the broad of the blade—her teeth set cruelly, and such a ferocious expression on her face that I myself might reasonably have had some personal fears, had I not been a customer. Oddly enough, however, my sympathies veered round instantaneously to the side of the ants, and I begged the woman to desist from her massacre, or at least to postpone it. "Oh yes," said she, smiling now with her teeth and eyes; "it's only some gentlemen as they come to;" which put quite a new face on the affair, and made me almost grateful to the ants that they had had enough discrimination to choose me for a spectator of their natural habits and vagaries.

As for the smaller ants, they seem ubiquitous. I have found them in all my boxes and bags, however tightly these were closed. They colonised in my sponge, so that twice a day I had to try a "drowning out," which was never successful. They went to bed with me, and were the most irritable of bed-fellows. Every morning I brushed them from my clothes like so much dust, and yet carried a few score about with me in my daily walks. If, forgetfully, I put a piece of chocolate or a biscuit on my chest-of-drawers, an hour later they swarmed over it, as did the inhabitants of Lilliput over Gulliver. There were cracks in my plastered wall, which must have harboured thousands of the animals, and I have watched their never-ceasing procession towards the floor or the ceiling, like a black thread suspended down the side of the room, at all hours of the day.

I suppose the winter-time is bad for spiders, else surely I should have seen many fine live specimens of this useful, though ugly creature. But there was a certain outhouse in connection with the villa where I was staying, which I shall always think of with as much respect as

I feel for the completest natural history collection of the civilised world. This building was at the end of a wooden pier running out a little way into the river, where it was alternately well saturated with the mists of the night and well baked by the sun during the day. I used to enter it tremulously, lest I should shake down a mammoth spider, with a body an inch long, and thick, hairy legs, who I knew had a trick of locating just over the threshold. Nor was I less careful about my steps, for there were shapely rats, and fine, glistening, chestnut-coloured roaches, who had an almost undisturbed sovereignty of the boards. Once inside, however, it was possible to sit down on something clean, in a spot over which insects were not suspended, and look round with comparative tranquillity. The roof and sides of the house were of pine boards, ill cemented, and well rotted by damp and heat, and in every corner, in every crevice, webs were spun, and inhabited by either the living or the dead. Such a collection of dry-sucked skeletons I have never seen anywhere else. In some cases the spiders had died in their webs, and their awe-inspiring bodies fluttered hither and thither in the breeze that blew from the river through the crevices in the sides. But one could appreciate their dreadfulness in life after watching one of them, still alive—very much alive, in fact—stalk, ensnare, and then carry off to his innermost den, with as much ease as you or I might carry a loaf of bread, a gigantic, garbaged bluebottle. The bite of these formidable monsters is said to prove as fatal as that of a rattlesnake, at times; but it is in mercy that they are gifted with a spirit so lethargic that they are not disposed to be violently offensive, or even ordinarily active, except at their dinner-time.

The buzzard, which is a noticeable bird throughout Florida, wherever two or three houses are found together, is worthy of a few words, though these birds may not come under the heading of pests. Indeed, the buzzard is a pest only in so much as he is a scavenger, and, like the human scavenger, he is unsavoury in himself and by association, rather than a doer of evil. He does as much in his way to stave off pestilence as the doctor in his way. Quickly as a Florida sun will generate corruption, the buzzard has an eye and a nostril that will be beforehand with the sun. On a fine day the birds are to be seen hovering high over the city, and if one or other of

them gradually lowers himself, his mighty wings getting more and more measurable, and then suddenly, with a swoop, comes somewhere to the ground, depend upon it he has got some prey. The niggers universally seem to have a veneration for the birds, which may be noticed strutting about their back premises, preying here and there, with all that sense of proprietorship which is so remarkable in the farmyard chanticler. They would rather kill a rude white man than a buzzard, were it not for the consequences. I was one day going by mail-car from a little settlement called Tarpon Springs, on the Gulf Coast, to Tampa—the “Espirito-Santa” of three and a half centuries ago—through almost untroubled pine-forests, when we passed a long, white skeleton lying to the left of the track, from which a couple of buzzards rose lazily into the air.

“What’s that?” I asked of the driver.

“Them’s buzzards,” said he, “finishing up old Charlie. Old Charlie was on this stage till t’other day, when he took a sickener of life, and fell down dead as a stone. So I just hysted him off the track and drove on with single horse. That’s all that’s left of Charlie.”

“Oh, Charlie was a horse then?” I said, somewhat relieved; for the bones were but ill shown, and I might, not unreasonably, have taken them for human remains.

“Yes; and a good ‘un till he took to sore shoulders.”

“And so the buzzards have eaten him?”

“Clean as my grandfather’s crown. Rare birds them! I suppose there’s many a meal for them in England, where you come from?”

I explained that buzzards had no part in the economy of English life—astonishing him; for, by his face, he evidently thought the birds were a heavenly arrangement for getting rid of dead bodies all the world over.

“Then what in thunder do you do with your dead horses?” he asked.

As politely as was possible, I told him of the knackers, the saddlers, the cat’s-meat ladies and gentlemen, all of whom relied very considerably on the carcasses of the animals, and would be sure to feel very wickedly towards the person who introduced buzzards into England, and domesticated them in London.

But the driver had no patience to hear more. He protested strongly that he would not for any consideration live in a country where horseflesh was not consumed

by buzzards, for security's sake, since no one would be likely to kill and eat a buzzard.

True, not so very long ago, so goes the tale, a certain English captain, of a commanding presence, and the reputation of a good sportsman no less than a good soldier, went out shooting in the woods near Jacksonville, and came home with a "splendid wild turkey"—so he called it—slung somewhat ostentatiously over his left shoulder, and took the bird straightway to his cook to be prepared for dinner. The cook was a black wag, who had no conception of the importance of an English Captain; and with a grin on his face—which, no doubt, the Captain, worthy man, took for an appreciative sign of joy, or a humble form of congratulation on his success—promised to cook the bird without fail. To celebrate an anniversary, the Captain had invited certain Jacksonville notables to dinner that day, who, by-the-by, would have jumped at the wild turkey quite apart from the anniversary. Well, the guests arrived, and the dinner was served, and the black man was seen to withdraw hurriedly with his hand to his nose. Here let the veil be drawn. The rascal had cooked his master's buzzard for his master's guests.

It were a shame in me to forget the mules—the staple quadruped of Jacksonville. They have almost the monopoly of the tramcars, which they pull laboriously up and down the length of Jacksonville's sandiest street, choosing their own pace, and, as a rule, laughing even at the hide whips which their drivers lay about their flanks as though they were threshing corn. They are a fine breed of animal, and when well-fed remarkably good-looking; not that it is impossible to ill-treat them by any other method than semi-starvation. Though they have thick skins, the poor fellows have their tender parts, like their betters, and none are more ready to appeal thereto than the rascals of niggers who, for their daily occupation, conduct the conveyance of wood to and from the sawmills at one end of the city. These same niggers, moreover, get their wits extraordinarily sharpened by their work. A London 'bus-driver might learn something from them in the expletive line. It is as though human nature develops best or worst—according to your ideal—when in constant friction with the animal nature of quadrupeds. The grey-haired expressman, Joseph, who took my baggage to the railway depôt, said

"Gee up, Bradlaugh!" when his mule was merely pardonably slow in getting along; but when the animal chose to try a standstill in the sand, the better to flick the flies from him, Joseph flew at him with the whip, and smothered him in strong adjectives. I asked Joseph who Bradlaugh was, but he did not know. He said "Gee up, Bradlaugh!" because a "wideawake young feller" from New York said it to his mules, and found it answer.

This subject of the diffusion of ideas reminds me that when I was at Cedar City, a bustling little Florida seaport on the Gulf of Mexico, renowned for its oysters, I was amused by hearing a parcel of nigger-boys engaged in wrapping oranges in tissue-paper, and boxing them for the northern markets, singing *Over the Garden Wall*, and singing it well, as though the song were no recent importation. These same young reprobates were well filled with comic songs, for they kept their throats at work for an hour, constantly varying the burden of the song. One of their choruses struck me as very adequately illustrative of their dispositions and morals as portrayed by their actions and in their countenances: "I don't care a darn what I do." It was worth something to see the small sinners leer at each other as this most immoral of lines slipped glibly and melodiously from their tongues, and struck dumb with admiration of their recklessness and heroism, a band of little black lasses, who had been chattering on the pier-head above them.

Hotel life in Jacksonville is a decided luxury, and like all luxuries is costly. But Jacksonville without its hotels would be a London shorn of Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's, or an Edinburgh destitute of its castle. Such magnificent buildings as the St. James's Hotel, forming one whole side of a very fair square, planted with orange and other trees; as the Carleton House, Everetts, and others, with their close thoughtfulness of the well-being and comfort of their guests, their display of electric illumination after sunset, their provision of music and other entertainments, and above all, perhaps, their most appetising menus, are fit dwellings for the Jay Goulds, the Disstons, the Carnegies, and other such millionaires. But in spite of all a manager can do to drive dull care from his house, and to lighten its atmosphere, existence must grow somewhat heavy on the hands of the habitués of these places. A breakfast, as ponderous as you please, cannot, even with

the help of a Jacksonville Times-Union, last longer than a couple of hours. Then an hour may be pleasantly passed under the verandah outside on two or three chairs at the same time. After this, a stroll through the city to discover the latest thing in fruits, or to execute a transaction by telegram, will fill up the day till dinner, which—happy time—may be stretched from two till four. Then, what with toothpick-chewing, and orange-eating, plus a little conversation, the rest of the afternoon and the evening till supper-time may be killed. After supper the ladies will want a modicum of gentlemen's society, and, moreover, will let no false modesty stand in the way of their satisfaction in this matter. They will invade the common room, and look very pleasant, while the half-a-dozen musicians in a corner are playing a symphony at sixes-and-sevens, and after the music will talk to you, if you seem worthy of the effort and likely to appreciate it. And then you will go to bed.

There is little home-life in America, we are told. It is said to be a science which American ladies think it beneath them to study; and, whether or not this be their view of the question, it is certainly a science which requires a very great deal of very judicious study before it can be turned to profitable account. But it is no less true that two are necessary for a quarrel, than that a home cannot well exist without the co-operation of at least two human beings, and whether it be a home in the real sense of the word depends on whether or not the co-operating parties are willing to sink their own individualities to some extent for the common benefit. It is this, it seems, that the American lady, no less than the American gentleman, is reluctant to do. The lady is loth to lose the title of "woman of the world," and the gentleman is quite as obstinately determined to remain a man among men rather than to decline (as he will regard it) into the position of a frequenter of drawing-rooms. They both yearn so strongly for public life, that they let private life slip altogether out of their ideal. For a moment I was struck dumb one day by seeing a lady with a cigarette (unlighted) in her mouth, exchanging morning salutation with another lady, who was walking up and down Carleton House promenade with a toothpick between her lips. But such an exhibition is characteristic, and quite accordant with the views

of a woman's rights current in the States. It also helps to show that the most advanced school of manners is sure to be represented in Jacksonville during the winter season.

The man who comes to Jacksonville to see orange-trees makes a mistake. During the season, indeed, he may see many oranges, which for size and quality cannot easily be surpassed, in the shops in Bay Street. But for the trees he must go elsewhere—a degree farther south, for instance. The specimens that line the thoroughfares are not satisfactory trees. They have a town look, and half the fruit on them is either abortive or never matures. Besides, they suffer from the cold in winter, and, if weakly, die. It is a gracious and harmless delusion for a rich man to buy an acre or two of land in the neighbourhood of the city, and, having built him a wooden house, to plant what he pleases to call a "grove" round about his dwelling. If it does little else, it will foster the imagination into longing to behold a real healthy and fruity grove; and the hundreds of red and green, all but stillborn fruit which day by day drop from his trees, will help to fatten his land, at the worst. No, the trees for which Jacksonville may take pride to herself are the live oaks, the one or two magnolias, and the fruits outside her boundaries—though the live oaks easily take the first place. These grand fellows keep their leaves fresh and green throughout the winter, and give a warm look to the city even when there is a frosty glaze on the ground. They drop a leaf now and then, as though to testify that they, no less than we, are but mortal, but, when one leaf goes, another comes. And they merit all the stares of admiration they receive from the newly-arrived Northerners, who troop wearily from the Fernandina railway depôt along Bay Street in quest of board and lodging.

These incoming visitors, by-the-bye, are a most curious part of Jacksonville winter life. One would suppose they were all well-to-do people, who could afford to pay the twenty or thirty dollars for their transport from the cold north to the less cold south, people to whom it was indifferent whether they wintered at Jacksonville or Madeira. But it is not so at all. There are at least as many artisans as rich men among the day's quota of arrivals; at least as many hard-working young and middle-aged women of the lower professional classes as of ladies. Here, for example, is a muscular

young fellow, with all his personal effects wrapped up in a red handkerchief, and slung over his shoulder. The doctor has recommended him to escape the winter of New York, and with hardly a moment's thought he decides to take steamer for Florida. It is as easy for an artisan to get work in one city as in another in this active North American continent, and there is the no small possibility that wages are better in Jacksonville than in New York. I have talked with young men of seventeen and eighteen who for three or four years have been accustomed to pass the spring in San Francisco, the summer at some cool watering-place in the Rockies or on Long Island, the autumn at Saratoga, returning invariably to Jacksonville for the winter, thereby seeing a good deal of what is called "life," ascertaining where the main chance can best be pursued, and gaining a most remarkable degree of self-reliance and independence, not to add considerable impudence. One lad of nineteen; who served as waiter in a Jacksonville hotel, "taught school" in the Far West, and took up printing when his fancy led him to New York; was inclined to be patronising to me because I was a Britisher. "Couldn't abide being pent up in that bit of an island of yours," he said. This youth had, a day or two before, bought a hundred acres of land in Central Florida with some of his savings. He guessed by the time he was back at Jacksonville he would be selling it for twice what it cost him. From sheer curiosity I asked the boy where his home was. "Home!" said he; "this is it. The old folks are still at Brownville, I guess; but I ain't got no time to go messing seeing after them. They let me loose one day, and I'll leave 'em loose, just to play fair. What'll you drink?"

These young Americans, with little education, except what comes to them instinctively and experimentally, are as anxious to get out of the nest and seek work on their own account as the most impetuous of young birds; and, once set going, they are to all appearances as indifferent to their parents as the young birds are. I suppose, however, they cannot readily crush the emotional part of them, and that their frequent invitation to strangers to have a drink is but filial affection asserting itself by a wrong channel.

Among the other arrivals, there is generally one man a day who hopes to live

through the winter by his wits. He is either a polypathic, a national, or a universal healer; or he will let you into a secret which will make your fortune—it has made his, and he transfers it out of kindly feeling for humanity—for the ridiculous sum of fifty cents. Likely enough he invests all his capital in a half-column advertisement in the Jacksonville paper, then takes an office on trust, and waits for the silly men and women who are ever ready to be deceived. Gentlemen with rheumatic cures do well among the coloured populace—and the more eloquently mendacious they are, the more certainly is success assured to them. I saw a nigger one day borrow a dollar from a friend, when they had both listened to a wordy declaration of the merits of a certain medicine which was being sold in the open air by a gentleman in a white hat—there is a great deal in the colour of the hat—mounted on an empty beer-barrel. The friend gave the other a dollar, but expostulated. "Why, you ain't got none of them complaints, have you?" "Not as I knows on," said the borrower, who by this had found his dollar, and got his bottle; "but he spoke so fine, and didn't you hear him say, 'One's sure to have 'em when one gets old'?" At this, the compliant friend looked rather glum, possibly fearing lest payment of the dollar should be postponed until the borrower became senile; but the moral is one which Yankee quacks know by heart.

Lastly, as indicative in some slight measure of the state of morals in Jacksonville, I would say that most religious denominations are represented in the city, and that one may go from the Jewish synagogue in one street to the most distant nigger conventicle amid the scrub in the suburbs without hearing anything suggestive of a spirit of bigotry. I heard a sermon from the rabbi at the synagogue which might have come from the Episcopal Church pulpit without exciting surprise or suspicions of dangerous latitudinarianism. And when the parson of the Episcopal Church heard that Père Hyacinthe was making a visit to Jacksonville, he kindly offered him his church for an entire Sunday, with all the money he could get by the collection. The Père was not likely to refuse such a chance, and he preached two very lengthy sermons in the most expressive, terse, and mellifluous French it has ever been my good fortune to hear. As for the congregations at these services, they

were tremendous, though five minutes of the sermon and observation of the refined attitude and gestures of the cultured Frenchman were as much as could be borne without fidgeting. When half an hour had passed, and Père Hyacinthe seemed as far from concluding as when he began, many of the gentlemen could stand it no longer, and left the church—not without contributing something at the door, as counterpoise for their apparent discourtesy.

It might be objected by some that the musical part of the Episcopal Church services in Jacksonville are conducted a little too theatrically. A finely-dressed young lady will, for example, sing a solo face to face with the congregation, her music—which she does not look at—held most artistically, and her mouth a studied and elegant oval, while with her eyes she ranges freely over the countenances of the ladies and gentlemen before her. But as this lady is gifted with a sweet voice, and a not un-beautiful face, I, myself, have nothing to say against the exhibition. Everyone follows his or her inclination as to sitting or standing during the service; the rubric is here, verily, a dead letter. But then, it may be said, they are mostly invalids wintering in Jacksonville for their health, and one ought not to be hypercritical in a place of worship. Granted readily, and it is just the piquant combination of a busy, money-making place, with its hotels and boarding-houses full of people who surrender themselves to the sway of whims and fancies, which makes sunny, blue-skied Jacksonville so delightful a wintering-place. It is a place where everyone may follow his bent unrestrainedly, and, if for no other reason than this, deserves to grow in popularity year by year.

PRINCESSES IN THE PAST.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

THE marriage of the youngest of the Queen's daughters seems to end a chapter in the history of the royal line—a history that is of some importance to others besides courtiers and genealogists. For as a thread of mingled colours and substance—now bright, now tarnished—so run the lives of the ruling race through the web of national life. The throngs that lined the sunny, dusty roads of the Isle of Wight to catch a glimpse of the bridal-train testify to the loving interest still felt in the domestic events of the family that continues the race of our

Plantagenets, Tudors, and Stuarts, while the sympathetic flutter that thrills the general female bosom is increased by the knowledge that reasons of state are no longer concerned in the matter; and that here, at all events, is a marriage of inclination and not of policy.

We may well contrast this happy marriage, which rather gives the mother a son than takes away a daughter, with other marriages, not so happy perhaps, where royal Princesses have been the brides—sometimes unwilling, often indifferent, but rarely, till now, with that full personal regard for their intended mates which is the chief ingredient in a perfect marriage.

We are a long way now from the time when the marriage of a Princess was an affair of general moment, in which every member of the community felt an interest—when conduits ran with wine, and all the bells of all the churches rang out with merry clangour; when the abbey was hung with crimson and gold, and everyone who came was feasted as of right in the King's hall; when the utmost amount of bluff, hilarious festivity was extracted from the practice of the old popular customs that followed and plagued the blushing bride even into the nuptial chamber. But if the old jollity and fellowship are gone, the cruel indifference is also gone which consigned the Princess, tenderly reared and cared for, to the clutch of some stranger—an unkind and, perhaps, elderly chieftain—to be carried off into strange lands and among unknown peoples, quite irrespective of any will of her own in the matter.

But while serious historians confine their attention to the ruling powers, and do not concern themselves with the joys and sorrows of the younger branches, and while even the writers of lighter and less laborious compilations draw the line at those within direct succession to the throne, the story of the loves and marriages of the younger daughters of the realm still remains unwritten. There are Princesses, indeed, who have altogether escaped notice.

Who is prepared dogmatically to testify, for instance, about the daughters of William the Conqueror, how many he had or whom they married?—to say nothing of the Saxon Princesses of the line of Cerdic, a long and indistinctly-written list—fair creatures with their lint-white locks, charming in themselves, but, as wives, rather a doubtful possession. They had a way of flying to convents or enveloping themselves

in a quite inconsistent celibacy. The spouse might be loving, his hall warm and well-provided, yet the bride had no thought for the love of human spouse—

But kept cold distance, and did thence remove,
To spend her living in eternal love.

Or if the woman were not all ice, she was all fire, passion, and revenge, and ready to sheathe a dagger in the heart of rival or of neglectful lover.

But to have married a daughter of the Conqueror! He must have been a bold man who came a-wooing in that family. Faultlessly reared, according to the traditions of the age, were these damsels, in almost cloistral seclusion, expending their young fancies in spinning flax or in worsted work—at least in such equivalent of worsted work as was existent in that dim age—promoted from the sampler to the web in which the history of their time should be expounded in cross-stitch.

How many there were of these patient spinsters and embroiderers who clustered about their mother's, stern Matilda's, chair—who can say with certainty, or who can record their fates? Was Gundreda one of them? that daughter of the Conqueror, whose bones were found thirty or forty years ago among the ruins of the once stately abbey of Lewes, which her husband, De Warenne, had founded. Brown, of the Archæological Society, says she was not, and hints at scandals that threw a ray of interest on that distant period; while Jones, of the Antiquarians, is equally certain that she was of the right royal line, and that the numerous descendants she left in private families of more or less distinction are entitled, if not to a quartering, at least to a lozenge, or a label, or some other heraldic device with the lion or leopard of England exhibited thereon.

In those early days, indeed, there was not that rigid adherence to genealogical limits which the policy of the ruling families of Europe has since imposed on its members. William the Conqueror no doubt owed something of the rude force of his nature and the stern common-sense that was his great characteristic, to the lineage of the tanner of Falaise. And the Plantagenets, if tradition is to be credited, inherited the fire of their nature from a still more extraordinary source. The father of Geoffrey Plantagenet wedded a wife, writes an old chronicler, "only for her beauty. He wist not whence she came, nor of what kindred she was. Seldom

would she come to church, but never abide the sacre"—or consecration of the Host—"and when this was noted of her husband, one day he bade four of his knights that they should hold her to her place through the mass. And this they did; but a little before the sacre she flew from them out of the window, and the children that were on her left hand she bore with her, and the others on her right she left behynde her. King Richard was wont to say, with reference to his strange great-grandmother, that no wonder they that came of such kindred were each contrary to the other"—adding, with a cheerful indifference to the future of himself and kindred, that they were all destined to return to the place whence they had come. Certainly all the Plantagenets had a considerable spice of the presumed maternal ancestry about them—of this Princess of the House of Darkness; but such share as may have fallen to their descendants has been so far mixed and diluted, as no longer to form an objectionable element.

The Plantagenets, it will be remembered, owed their title to the English crown to marriage with a Princess, a titular Empress, indeed, although her first marriage to the Emperor of the period seems to have been more formal than real. Anyhow, the Emperor, it is said, put her away, not for her fault, but from a desire to assume the hermit's cowl. This desire, according to the same monkish tradition, he accomplished in the neighbourhood of Chester, where he occupied the cell left vacant by Harold Infelix.

There are missing Princesses, too, among the daughters of Henry the Second, whose wife, the fair and jealous Eleanor, brought him six noble daughters, of whom only three are fully accounted for. These three, however, established for themselves a footing in history, by marrying Kings or reigning Dukes, the most important being the marriage of Matilda to Henry the Lion, one of the powerful and prolific race of Guelfs, from whom spring our present royal family. The story of a Countess of the house of Guelf, who had as many children as there are days of the year, three of whom were born together in a year of our Lord unknown, may be put aside as a humorous exaggeration. But the son of an English Princess and the Guelf became the first Duke of Brunswick, a title which, after all these centuries of existence, seems likely to be merged in the possessions of the Hohenzollerns.

We are not certain, either, whether all King John's daughters have been duly accounted for. They were children at their much-abused father's death, and the duty of marrying them to good advantage fell upon their brother, Henry the Third, who found a husband for the eldest in the Scotch king, Alexander the Second, while the youngest made a more brilliant, but hardly more fortunate match with the Emperor Frederick the Second. The intermediate daughter pleased herself by marrying a subject, the rising and powerful Earl of Pembroke, to whom, however, the alliance brought only evil fortune. The Barons resented the match extremely. The King had wasted a Princess, by permitting her to marry one of their order, when she might have been utilised in obtaining an ally abroad. Anyhow, the Earl was murdered some two years after his marriage, and his widow bestowed herself in the most hasty and inconsiderate manner upon Simon de Montfort, the famous champion of the aristocratic, as opposed to the royal, party.

Of Henry's own daughters by Eleanor of Provence, the elder married her cousin, Alexander of Scotland, while the younger, whose name, Beatrice, excites some interest in this connection, was bestowed upon John, Duke of Bretagne. This latter was a marriage which seems to have been happy enough during the short time it lasted, but Beatrice, after bringing her husband sundry children, died at an early age.

Another generation now appears, and the little group of Princesses, the children of Edward the First, and his faithful, much-loved wife, Eleanor. Of these only Joan excites our interest—Joan, who was born at Acre, while husband and wife were there crusading for the Holy Land. This young woman had a fair share of the wilful character of the Plantagenets, without their over-weening pride, and after her first marriage, a sufficiently suitable match, with Gilbert, Earl of Gloucester, she married her deceased husband's squire or steward, Ralph Montheimer. Such a thing was then deemed monstrous, unheard-of, that a Princess of the royal house should marry a simple squire, and those about the King proposed to punish the audacious fellow with a traitor's doom. But the stout squire had carried himself so bravely in the Scottish wars that the King forgave him, and we may hope that the pair lived happily ever after. "A ful holy woman was the lady of Acre"—so writes one of the

chroniclers, though his chief reason for the statement was that the body of the Princess was found in a perfect state fifty-two years afterwards. She was buried in the Church of the "Frères Austines" at Clare, in Suffolk, which is, or was recently, used as a barn.

The unhappy Edward the Second had two daughters, the younger of whom was Joan, who was given in marriage by her brother, the third Edward, to David, King of Scotland, and was derisively nicknamed by the Scots, Joan Makerpeace. An honourable title we should think it now, but scarcely so regarded by the Scot of the period. Joan took with her to Scotland, as part of her dower, the regalia of Scotland, still proudly exhibited in Edinburgh Castle, but she did not take back the coronation stone which her brother had promised to restore, but which the English people preferred should remain in Westminster Abbey. But the black cross of Scotland went back, the morsel of the true cross which gave its name originally to Holyrood Abbey, and many other valuable relics. The royal bridegroom was only seven years old, and in spite of her title, Princess Joan could have had little peace in her wedded life. After a long exile in France, the young pair came to their kingdom, and Joan saw her husband taken prisoner at the battle of Neville's Cross, after which he remained a captive for eleven years. Nor did any children come to bless the union, and thus the house of Bruce came to an end, and the Stuarts grasped the uneasy crown of Scotland.

Of the five little Princesses who came to Edward the Third and Philippa, we hear very little. There were plenty of stout sons, who promised to place the Plantagenet race beyond the fear of extinction, and thus the future of the daughters of the house became of less national moment. Their history may be dug in fragments out of wardrobe accounts, or be found lurking in pipe-rolls—here a dry bone, as it were, and there a stray lock of hair from once abundant tresses, as when an old tomb is explored, but little else. The heroine of the period is Countess Joan, the fair Maid of Kent, the King's cousin, and the daughter of that Earl of Kent who was treacherously led into the toils of his enemies at Corfe Castle. This royal lady's wedding adventures are rather curious. No longer was the Princess of the period brought up in seclusion and cloistral simplicity. Young Countess Joan, not

over rich—for the Earldom of Kent was worth little more than forty pounds a year, and other possessions had been escheated—and altogether rather a waif and stray among Princesses, had been brought up in the household of William Montague, Earl of Salisbury. And here she met a fine young fellow, one of the Earl's household, Thomas Holand, of a Lancashire family, not in any way distinguished, who fell deeply in love with fair Joan, and persuaded her to some form of betrothal which the indiscreet young couple persuaded themselves was as good as a formal marriage. Presently Holand was called away to the French wars, where he signalised himself greatly, especially at Cressy, where he had chief command in the van of Prince Edward's army, and while he was away, Joan, who, with her beauty and bonhomie, had a fair share of fickleness and of freedom of manner, was persuaded by the Earl of Salisbury to contract herself to him.

So when Sir Thomas Holand returned with all his honours upon him and full of lover-like ardour, he found his young wife actually the wife of another—and a very powerful other—who decidedly refused to part with her. Sir Thomas, however, appealed to the ecclesiastical courts, and finally to the Pope, who gave judgment in his favour, with restitution of conjugal rights: a judgment in which the Earl finally acquiesced, and Joan, who was ready to be the spoil of the victor, whosoever he might be, returned contented to her first love. Both Holand and the fair Joan were in high favour with the Black Prince, and the former soon had assigned to him sufficient honours and revenues. He was made Lieutenant and Captain-General of the Dukedom of Brittany, with full possession of all the revenues of the duchy, and, afterwards, also Governor of the Channel Islands, with other charges and trusts of importance. Sir Thomas died leaving Joan still young and handsome, and she presently married the Black Prince, who had long been enamoured of his cousin, and, as everybody knows, she became the mother of Richard the Second. Her children by Holand were raised to the highest honours in the English peerage, and scandal of recent days has made free with her character and that of her husband, and attributed the extraordinary favours he received to unworthy causes. But Joan, before she died, gave directions that she should be buried by the side of her first

husband—a silent and potent testimony in her favour as a faithful wife.

With the rise to power of the House of Lancaster, we see traces of a more politic and cunning hand in the disposal of the royal Princesses. They were no longer wasted, but their alliances were made to serve the turns of foreign policy. One of Henry the Fourth's daughters married Louis of Bavaria, the Elector Palatine, and another was sent in one of the King's ships to Denmark, to marry the King, who was but a small youth, and still under his mother's tutelage. But here occurs a considerable hiatus in Princesses. The cruel broils of the Wars of the Roses intervene, and at last we come to a royal Princess—Elizabeth, the last direct representative of the House of York—who, in her youth and inexperience, was selected to marry the chilly valetudinarian, King Henry the Seventh.

And now we are at length clear of the Middle Ages, and may walk in the light of full and contemporary records. The old times are finished—the days of great feasts, great jousts, tourneys, “daunsyngs, carolyngs,” when a royal wedding was feasted with great joy and triumphs. The pageantry and some of the brilliance of the old régime still continue, an echo of the horn of Roncesvalles; but it is an echo only. The old world has passed away, and brave new creatures walk the earth—lords and ladies in silken attire, and princesses with their splendid trains.

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

MONMOUTHSHIRE.

As we cross the Severn by the steam-ferry to Portskewet, in Monmouthshire, the names of the shoals which occupy so much of the river-bed, known as Welsh ground and Welsh banks, show that, in popular estimation, the county we are about to enter is really a part of Wales. Indeed, it was not until the reign of Henry the Eighth that Monmouth became—as far as the King's council could make it so—an English county. Even then the district remained under the jurisdiction of Welsh judges, and the county was actually brought under the English jurisprudence in the time of Charles the Second, when it was united to the Oxford Circuit; while the anomalous and irregular jurisdiction of the Lords Marches was only finally

abolished in the first year of the reign of William and Mary.

The ferry itself is not without historical interest. Here, no doubt, was the Trajectus of the Roman itinerary, and ferry-boats passed to and fro, while the sunshine flashed on the helmets of the Roman legionaries, and glittered on their bright accoutrements. Saxon chiefs, too, in their barbaric bravery, thronged across as they followed their Lord Harold to the wars against the Welsh. Harold himself built a palace at Portskewet, and there entertained the Confessor when he held his court at Gloucester. And yet, the ferry is called the New Passage!

The New Passage, in fact, owes its name to a strange incident in the Civil Wars. It was towards the close of the contest—Naseby had been fought and lost by the King, who, having found a precarious refuge at Raglan Castle, was moving hither and thither, closely pursued by his enemies—that one day the ferrymen were hailed by a horseman, accompanied by two or three attendants, whose horses showed by their condition that they had been ridden far and fast. The boatmen recognised the King, and hastened to get out the great horse-boat, and then ferried across the little cavalcade to the English shore. The tide was low and the channel narrow, the great sandbanks were high and dry; and the boatmen pointed out that time would be saved by landing on the bank called the English stones, whence the King and his suite could ride across to the shore without danger. The King thanked the men, rewarded them royally, and rode away.

Hardly had the ferrymen returned to their station on the Portskewet side, when a troop of Parliament horse, eighteen or so in number, rode up in hot pursuit, and shouted roughly to the men to get ready their boats. The boatmen made difficulties and objections, doing all they could to gain time; but the leader of the band drew his sword, and swore that he would cut them down if they hesitated or made the least delay. The boatmen sullenly drew up their boats, and took on board their unwelcome passengers—thus hot upon the King's trail.

By this time the tide had turned and the fierce floodtide of the Severn sea was showing itself in whirls and patches here and there; but the shoals were still high above the water, although the boatmen well knew that in a few minutes' time the tide

would be running like a millstream between the shoals and the shore. But the ferrymen ran their boat on the English stones, and mutely intimated that now the voyage was ended. There, indeed, on the margin of the now rushing waters were the fresh hoof-marks of the horses of the fugitives. The Roundheads hastily landed, and rode off across the shoal, and the ferrymen pushed off and rowed away.

There is no fiercer tide along all the English shore than that which rushes twice a day up the Severn sea. The wide mouth of the estuary, opening towards the great tidal-wave that swirls across the broad Atlantic, gathers the rush of waters which dash up the narrower throat of the channel with the westerly gale, rising as they go in a bore or wall of waters several feet in height. And thus the fate of the unhappy troopers was quickly sealed—in front of them a swift channel now quite impassable, behind them the foaming tide. There was a shout of rage and despair, a struggle in the foaming waves, and then all was silent, not a man escaping to bear witness to the treachery of the ferrymen.

Such is the story as it was told, when it was safe to tell it; but it seems that at the time, the loss of the detachment was attributed to accident, like the loss of a troop of cavalry in crossing a ford during the Afghan war. So, by the order of General Cromwell, the ferry was abolished as dangerous, and, when it was once more opened, a century or so later, it was called the New Passage.

About here the coast of Monmouth is low and flat, giving little promise of the charming scenery of the interior. These marshes are known as Caldecott and Wentloog levels, and are held against the sea and its tides by walls and banks of ancient date, the whole being kept in order and regulated under the laws of Romney Marsh, the type and model of such amphibious jurisprudence.

Perhaps the pleasantest way of entering the county is by steamer from Bristol, with glimpses of the Welsh mountains in passing up the river, and ending the voyage at pleasant Chepstow, on the Wye, from which the golden valley gradually unfolds itself in scenes of soft, luxuriant beauty—with Tintern on the way embosomed in woods, sweetest and most romantic of all the ruined abbeys.

Chepstow, with its noble castle welded to the perpendicular cliff that rises from the brink of the river, has many points of

interest. In one of the round towers of the castle is shown the chamber where Henry Martyn, the regicide, was imprisoned for twenty years. Martyn surrendered under the royal proclamation, and thus saved his life; and his imprisonment was not of a very rigorous nature. His wife was allowed to live with him, and he had his own servants, while he might even visit his friends in the neighbourhood with the escort of a warder. Then there are fragments of the old walls of the town, and an ancient gateway, with pleasant, cheerful streets.

Chepstow is said to have been originally built of the materials of the old Roman station known as *Caerwent*, that stands a few miles to the westward, with the foundations of its enclosing walls still to be traced. In Leland's time, "the places where the four gates was yet appeare, and the most part of the wal yet stondeh, but al to minischyd and torn." The whole space is now occupied by small enclosures and cottages, and is hardly to be distinguished from the country around it. But we may follow the Roman road to *Caerleon*—the camp or fort of the legion—pleasantly placed in a bend of the river *Usk*, a few miles above *Newport*. And here there are still towers and fragments of walls remaining, to testify to the ancient importance of the place, now a mere village, but once the provincial capital of *Britannia secunda*, with its public buildings, palaces, and temples. Here were the headquarters of the second Augustan Legion, as numerous monuments and inscriptions remain to testify. Many of the remains recovered from the earth are scattered up and down, in various museums and private collections; but an excellent museum has now for some years existed in the village, rich with interesting relics of Roman and mediæval times.

All this country between the *Usk* and the *Wye* formed the Welsh principality of *Gwent*, a country noted for its corn and honey. This principality, which, no doubt, was once far more extensive, and included the whole valley of the *Wye* and *Severn*, was, in the latter days of its Welsh rulers, divided into two parts, one "above the wood," and the other "below the wood." This wood still exists to the northward of the two Roman stations, and retains the ancient name of the principality as *Wentwood*. Although now sadly shrunk within its once extensive limits, that famous forest of *Wentwood* contained six castles, of which *Caldecott* was the chief, still a noble

ruin towering over the marshy flat around. Nowadays the mantle of the Welsh Princes, as well as of the Norman Barons, seems to have fallen on the house of *Beaufort*, for woods, castles, mansions, wherever you go, all seem to belong to the noble Duke of that ilk, who, it may be said, is no churlish guardian of the treasures of antiquity.

The land of *Gwent* was one of the first to tempt the cupidity of the Norman Barons, when they were fairly settled in the Saxon land, and everywhere they pushed their way through the fertile, open country, appropriating the dues and tributes of the Welsh Princes, and imposing other feudal burdens, but not to any extent expropriating the proprietors of the soil or interfering much with their laws and customs. But everywhere they built strong castles to overawe their new tenants, as well as to check the inroads of the fighting Welshmen from the hills. Against the strong castles and warlike engines of the Normans the Welshmen bit and fought in vain, although at times, when some wrong or grievance stirred their hearts, and their bards lashed them to madness with stinging words, they would pour over the land with fierce, irresistible rush.

Such a thing happened in the reign of *Henry the Second* when *Owain*, the son of *Caradoc*, was treacherously slain by the King's soldiers from *Newport*, and his father and younger brother raised the country, and devastated the English land to the gates of *Hereford* and *Gloucester*; and again, when the third *Henry* invaded the Welsh borders, and the hardy mountaineers swept him back to his fortified camp about *Grosmont Castle*, and then surprised the royal troops, and carried off a splendid loot—five hundred horses, baggage-waggons loaded with supplies, and much treasure of various kinds. For the *Cymro*, like the *Gael*, fought magnificently till his sack was full of plunder, and then his only thought was how to get back to his nest among the hills and exhibit his prize to his admiring womankind.

But in all these raids and invasions the Normans, in their strong castles, kept their grip upon the land; and most of these strongholds, which became useless when the Welshmen became reconciled to the rule of the English Kings, have left fine and extensive ruins, so that *Monmouthshire* is richer, perhaps, than any other district in England in these relics of military architecture. There is *Aber-*

gavenny Castle, founded by Hameline Balun, one of the Conqueror's barons, who had annexed the district of Upper Gwent, and which came, after many changes, into the hands of the De Braose family, of which was that William who was the lover of Llewellyn's wife. Llewellyn, it is said, discovered the intrigue, and made short work of William by hanging him to the nearest tree, and then went to his wife, and asked tauntingly what she would give to see her William.

"Wales, and England, and Llewellyn, I'd give them all to see my William,"

replied the woman, in a burst of passion, when her husband drew her to the window and pointed out her William dangling in the air. It was one of the De Braoses, too, who gave a great banquet to all the Welsh chiefs of the country round, and during the feast ordered the gates to be shut, and then fell upon his guests with his men-at-arms, and made an end of them. Treachery and murder, indeed, were familiar to the old castle, whose blood-stained walls, in picturesque ruin, still overhang the river Usk, while the old borough, once walled and fortified, has still an old town gate and other relics to show of its ancient state. The barony of Abergavenny, it may be noted, is one of the few that are still held by tenure, the possession of the old ruined walls of the castle giving the title to the peerage.

Under the walls of the castle stood an old priory of Benedictines, a cell to the monastery of St. Vincent, in Mons; and the priory church is now the church of the parish, with a fine collection of mediæval monuments—of knights who fell in the Wars of the Roses, or fought at Agincourt, with old and battered effigies of earlier but nameless warriors.

To the north, among the Black Mountains, stood a solitary tower, an outpost among the hills, which has given its name to the village of Oldecastle, the latter the birthplace of the famed Sir John, of Lollard fame; while, within hail of Abergavenny—at least, where a horse might gallop in an hour—stands the nearest of a strong triangle of castles.

Three castles fayre are in a goodly ground.

White Castle, at the western apex of the figure, belonged to the Conqueror's Earl of Hereford, to the Cantalupes and De Braoses, but it came into the possession of the Crown in the reign of Henry the Third, and was passed on to the Duchy of Lancaster, to which its ruins still belong.

The second of these castles is Grosmont, upon the bend of the little river Monnow, which has left some interesting remains. The castle was often attacked by the Welsh, and the whole district is rich with legends of these combats. From Craig Hill close by, Owen Glyndwr was driven by Prince Hal. Grosmont, indeed, had long been a favourite seat of the house of Lancaster, and the Prince's great-grandfather had been known as Henry Grismont; for here he was born, and here probably also was born Blanche, the Prince's grandmother, who brought all the honours and possessions of the Earldom of Lancaster to John of Gaunt, her husband.

The triangle is completed by Skenfrith, lower down the river Monnow, a plain and early stronghold, with curtain walls and flanking towers. Then a small post half-way to Monmouth, a strongly fortified town, was protected by a fort that has left its name of Newcastle to the village. The district hereabouts is—or used to be—noted as eminently fairy-ground. A barrow in the neighbourhood was the resort of troubled spirits, a famous oak has for centuries been the object of superstitious reverence, and a fairy well of wondrous efficacy still pours forth its limpid stream close by.

Following the course of the river Monnow we soon come to Monmouth, pleasantly situated in the fork of the rivers Monnow and Wye, a picturesque and old-fashioned town, with its ancient bridges and its old gateway, still known as the Welsh Gate. The old castle is but a broken ruin, but the corner in which Henry the Fifth was born is still pointed out. The original Norman castle was rased to the ground by Simon de Montfort, who had taken it from his rival, the Earl of Gloucester, and the older portions of the present building are the work of Edward the First's time, when it was assigned to the Duchy of Lancaster, and some of John of Gaunt's work can no doubt be traced. Now it has come into the hands of the Beauforts, and the castle-house was built out of the materials of the old castle by someone of that family in the year 1673. Most of Gaunt's buildings are of the red grit-stone of the neighbourhood, and as John was not accustomed to stint himself for room, there are many vestiges of his work to be found scattered about stables and out-houses in the vicinity, with cellars under old houses, and remains of crypts, all which

testify to the ancient extent and importance of the castle.

Once upon a time there was a manufacture of caps at Monmouth, and, if Fluellen be correct in his quotation of the chronicles, his countrymen wore these caps at the battle of Cressy, "If your majesties is remembered of it"—of the passage in the chronicles, that is, "the Welshmen did goot service in a garden where leeks did grow, wearing leeks in their Monmouth caps." And Fuller, in his chapter on Monmouth, gives an account of the manufacture, from which it seems that these were felted woollen caps—flat, and in form resembling the "beret" still worn by the fishermen on the Norman coast. The business was ruined, it is said, by a visitation of the plague, and the manufacture transferred to Bewdley.

Passing out of Monmouth by the Welsh gate and the charming ancient bridge, we are on the highway to Raglan Castle, the stateliest and most interesting ruin, perhaps, in all England. On the way we cross the little brawling river Trothey, which has given its name to Troy House, just below, a mansion built by Inigo Jones, the gardens of which should be of interest to agriculturists as one of the historical centres of modern gardening. William Herbert, who owned the place in the reign of Henry the Eighth, took a great pride and pleasure in his gardens, and was at great pains to introduce new varieties of all kinds. We read that he dispatched two men, Richards and Williams, to France and Flanders, to study horticulture; and these men brought back vegetables and fruit-trees of many improved strains, which, propagated and distributed, established themselves in the gardens and orchards of the west country. From that date Troy House was always noted for its fruit; and when King Charles the First was on a visit at Raglan Castle, Sir Thomas Somerset, who then owned the mansion, took over to his brother, the Earl of Worcester, a great basket full of dishes of most splendid fruit. The Marquis set the dishes before the King with his own hands: "Not from Lincoln that was, or London that is, or York that is to be, but from Troy, most gracious majesty!" Upon which the King answered, with his melancholy smile, "Truly, my lord, I have heard that corn grows where Troy once stood, but I never thought there had grown apricots."

Raglan is no stern, gaunt Norman castle, but a grand mansion as well as a

fortress, with oriels and mullioned windows, and the fragments of saloons and boudoirs among the wreck of walls pierced for arrows, and platforms from which guns have thundered, and machicolated towers, and, crowning all, the Melyn-y-Gwent, the great yellow citadel of Gwent. Herberts and Somersets added to it and embellished it, and at the outbreak of the civil wars the then Marquis of Worcester put it in a thorough state of defence, and, what is more, raised an army to garrison and defend it. Not an army, indeed, which could keep the field against the great levies of the Parliament, but a compact little force of fifteen hundred foot and five hundred horse, all equipped and maintained at the Marquis's sole cost and charge. After skirmishing round about with more or less success, the Marquis shut himself up with his forces in his great castle, and stood a siege very creditably against overwhelming odds, Fairfax, the Parliamentary General, in person directing the attack. At last the Marquis had to surrender on terms, and was sent a prisoner to the Tower of London, and died in captivity. Then the castle was dismantled and plundered, and has never since been inhabited.

From Raglan the road or railway, which we please, leads us on to Usk, on the river of the same name.

A castle there in Oske doth yet remaine,

A seat where kings and princes have been borne.

This castle was once the stronghold of the Mortimers, and then came by inheritance to the House of York, and was the birthplace of sundry Princes of the House of York, among them being, it is said, the future Kings, Edward the Fourth and Richard the Third. There are still considerable remains—shattered walls and ivy-mantled towers standing enclosed in the private grounds of Usk House.

We are now approaching the wilder part of Monmouthshire—a country of bleak, low-crowned mountains and wild plateaus, with sweet, romantic valleys intermingled; with ironworks perched among the crannies of the hills, and mines scattered here and there. Heaps of slag are often found among the hills, showing that iron-ore was extracted in those remote times. The modern iron manufacture began in the reign of Elizabeth, when the ironworks of Kent and Sussex were also in full activity. As the forests disappeared, and charcoal became scarce and dear, the industry declined, and not until coal came into use

for smelting, and the blast-furnace was invented, did the revival of the iron trade begin.

Pontypool may be considered the metropolis of this iron country; a town that began business in the iron way as early as the reign of Charles the Second, when one Thomas Allgood, of Northampton, settled there. Thomas was an inventor and investigator, who discovered the art of varnishing tin plate, so as to imitate—at a long distance it must be owned—the beautiful lacquer of Japan. To him we owe our early tea-trays, our japanned boxes beloved of solicitors, and the blackened tin work that was once known as Pontypool ware. But there is nothing left of all this at Pontypool. Birmingham has gathered these manufactures to itself, and Pontypool ware, along with Abergavenny wigs and Monmouth caps, has descended into the limbo of forgotten arts.

Pontypool owes its new life to the great coal and iron basin on the edge of which it stands, and ironworks in the neighbourhood were founded towards the end of the seventeenth century by Capel Hanbury, whose son, Major Hanbury, was a friend and supporter of Sir Robert Walpole. The Blaenavon Works on the western slope of the Blorenge mountain, began operations in 1789, and the famous Nant-y-glo works were founded six years later.

Let us take a glimpse of this same district before the country was transformed by the smoke and dust of coal-mines and iron-works, and when Edmund Jones, dissenting minister, of Aberystwith, published his geographical account of his own parish. This little book was published at Trevecka in 1779, and as its author was then an elderly man, his recollections went back to a period when many of the old soldiers of the civil wars were still in the land. With this preamble, listen to his story of the notable conversion of John James Watkins.

"He was a native of Aberystwith"—not to be confounded with the greater Aberystwith by the sea—"in the Royal army, against the Parliament, and very fierce on that side. In fencing none could stand before him. He dangerously wounded my grandfather, running his sword upon his ribs in a fray. Which a relation of my grandfather hearing of, went with a bill-staff to be revenged upon him; but it was well for them both that he could not be found. For, hear-

ing that a preacher was coming down to preach the Word, John went up the church lane with a sword by his side, intending to kill him. Now, when the preacher met the soldier, he took off his hat to him, upon which the soldier said in himself, 'He is a clean-looking man; it is a pity to kill him. I will go and hear him.' And he went to the preaching, and was converted under the sermon, and made a soldier of the Word. But when he saw Sabbath-breakers, as long as he carried a sword he would draw upon them, and drive them away."

Here again is a silhouette of one of the opposite side: "John ap John went into the Army of the Parliament, where he remained until the taking of Raglan Castle. While he was abroad, in Kent or Sussex, a Nonconformist minister there gave him a revival in the way of goodness. He had the strictness of the old Puritans, and wore his beard long, after their manner." And another, of William John Rosser, of whom a firm old Churchwoman said, "If any of the Roundheads ever went to Heaven, William John Rosser went there."

Or let us take a sketch of a female disciple, Alice William Nicholas, who, when her husband behaved roughly towards her, used to say—with exasperating meekness, no doubt—"Well, the people of Israel were delivered at last from under Pharaoh's hand." 'What!' said he, 'dost thou liken me to Pharaoh?' "A man terrible to behold in a passion," adds the worthy minister. Then he gives us a short account of his own family; his grandfather, who loved a vain life, and was given to drinking; his father, John Lewis, who, going to some distant church one day with several companions, to hear a famous preacher, "being before time, went, according to their manner at home, to play ball in the churchyard; but afterwards took the sermon to heart, and never played ball after." This ball play in the churchyard and by the way was long a favourite custom, the game being of the nature of fives, or a kind of churchyard tennis.

But it is about the superstitions of the county that Mr. Edmund Jones is such a valuable witness. He knows all about the fairies, believes in them implicitly, and discusses them in the following fashion:

"In former times, more than at present, there were frequent appearances of the fairies in Wales. I think as much in the parish of Aberystwith as in any other, and

more than in some. They are, no doubt, evil spirits. Abundance of people saw them and heard their music, which everyone said was low and pleasant, but none could ever learn the tune. Their talk was like many talking together, but the words seldom heard. But to those who did hear, they seemed to dispute much about future events, and about what they were to do. Sometimes they came like dancing companies with music, but often also in the form of funerals. When dancing, they would entice persons into their company, usually for a whole year, as they did to Edmund William Rees, a man I know well, who came back at the year's end, and looked very bad."

Many tales has our minister to tell of the appearance of the fairies to people he knew well, but he also has his own experiences to relate. "For when a very young boy, going with my aunt, Elizabeth Rogers, at the end of a field we were passing, I saw the likeness of a sheep-fold, with the door towards the south, and over the door, instead of a lintel, a dried branch of a hazel-tree, and within the fold a company of many people. Some sitting downward, some going in and coming out, bowing their heads as they passed under the branch—a musician among them, and a fair woman with a high-crowned hat and a red jacket, who made a better appearance than the rest. I still have a pretty clear idea of her white face and well-formed countenance."

There was ae winsome wench and walie !

Tam o' Shanter was not written then, or we might have thought that the minister had his mind on "cutty sark."

COUNT PAOLO'S RING.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER I.

ALL through the sultry summer's day Angela had stood under the shadows of a stone gateway in one of the older streets of Nice, with her basket of flowers by her side. Without, in the narrow street, the sun shone so fiercely that the pavement almost scorched the feet of the passers-by, and even the brown-faced children ceased their play and lay—half exhausted by the heat—idly basking in the sunshine. The gateway led into a square, open space, which had, probably, at some remote period been a garden belonging to one of the great houses which stood empty

and half ruined now on either side. There were two or three orange-trees still remaining; here and there a tall white lily or a brilliant geranium gleamed among the long, coarse grass; and a great vine had crept up the gateway, and hung its twisting tendrils and cool green leaves just above the girl's head.

The sun shone brightly in the street and in the grass-covered court, but there was a cool spot of shade under the wide gateway where the girl stood, and many of the passers-by looked at her, and looked again, and bought a cluster of flowers for the sake of the seller's fair face.

She was a tall girl, dressed in a blue linen frock, with a sailor-collar of lighter blue tied round her fair neck with a loose knot of ribbon, and she wore a hat of some coarse straw, which sheltered her face and dark eyes from the sun. For, although her complexion was exquisitely fair and clear, and the little soft curls which rippled round her forehead, and the long, thick plait which hung down her back to her waist, were of a pale golden tint, the eyes were dark and liquid, and full of hidden fire and passion, and contrasted oddly with the fairness of the skin.

"Italian eyes in an English face," as one lady passing said to her companion, and, for the sake of the fair English face and the memories it recalled, she went back and spoke a few pleasant words to the flower-girl, and added another bunch of flowers to those which already half filled her basket.

Once, too, during the afternoon, a young English artist passed, and, after gazing with delighted eyes at the fair picture before him—the stone gateway, the glimpse of neglected garden beyond, the girl with her proud, beautiful face and her basket of brilliant flowers—hesitated, passed and repassed, and finally approached, and, taking off his hat, stammered an earnest entreaty that mademoiselle would kindly allow him to make a sketch of her. She had looked at him with her beautiful, questioning eyes, and assented gravely; but when, an hour afterwards, the sketch was finished, and the artist, well satisfied with his work, offered her a liberal reward, she coloured, drew up her head proudly, and waved the money aside.

"Monsieur is welcome. My father, too, is an artist," she said, and something in her manner and voice told the Englishman that any further attempt to induce her to accept the money would be useless.

She did not, however, refuse; when

by-and-by he went into a confectioner's, and returned with some white rolls and chocolate and a bunch of grapes; to share his simple meal. She had eaten nothing since morning, and she was tired and faint, and the chocolate and fruit were very refreshing.

Her grave face softened, and her white teeth gleamed, and a sudden brightness came into her great eyes as she smiled and thanked him.

An old crone—a mere bundle of rags with a gaudy handkerchief tied turban-wise round her head—looked at her curiously as the artist turned away.

"Ah, ah! why do you not smile so always, silly one? You would sell twice as many flowers," she said contemptuously. "Bah!"—as the girl frowned and coloured—"who would care to buy from such an unsmiling face?"

The frown deepened on the girl's face. She drew up her head haughtily, and her eyes darkened.

"Why should I smile? I sell flowers, not smiles," she said in a harsh voice.

"You will be ready enough to sell them some day;" and the old woman laughed unpleasantly. "Some day when your roses are faded and your market over, and the purchasers are few and unwilling, then you will be ready. Mark my words, proud one!" and she shuffled away with a malicious laugh.

Angela looked after her and contracted her brows angrily; then, bending over her basket, she busied herself in sorting out the withered flowers, and tying the others afresh.

The intense heat of the day had passed, the sun was sinking, and a cooler air was blowing off the sea. Angela was tired and cramped with standing so long in one position, but she still lingered under the gateway in the hope of selling the flowers which still remained in her basket to some chance customer—some English or American tourist—who might pass, returning from the day's excursion, to his hotel. But, though she waited patiently, no one came, and she was just about to take up her basket and return home, when a man's figure passed the gateway. He glanced carelessly at the flowers, paused suddenly, looked again, more eagerly this time, and then came forward and bowed to the shrinking girl with an insolent smile on his bold face.

"So, my pretty one, I have found you at last," he said.

The girl did not answer; but her eyes dilated, and she looked eagerly round as if seeking a way of escape. But there was no outlet to the little court, and the man's tall figure blocked up the gateway. He laughed as he saw her disappointed glance.

"You cannot escape me so easily this time! Why are you so cruel, mademoiselle? What, not one word—one smile for your devoted, adoring slave? Day after day I have watched for you, and now that a fortunate chance has thrown me across your path, you treat me with this chilling disdain—this cruel silence? What, still not a word? Permit me, then, to buy some of these flowers. They are faded, it is true; but a smile from you, mademoiselle, will revive them."

He bent forward as he spoke, and attempted to take a small cluster of rose-buds from the basket. The girl snatched it away, and her eyes gleamed angrily.

"Monsieur, they are not for sale," she said coldly.

"What! You will not even sell me your flowers?" and the man's face darkened, he bit his moustache savagely, and there came a fierce light into his eyes which frightened the girl.

She glanced nervously up the street. Except for one or two children it was almost empty now, and the shadows were gathering darkly. She drew up her head, and made a movement as if to pass her persecutor.

"Permit me to pass, monsieur. It grows late," she said.

"Not till I have a flower! What!" as the girl hesitated, and a look of repugnance and loathing crossed her face, "you will not? Truly, a kiss will be more acceptable," he added with an insolent laugh, and he came nearer and put his hand on her shoulder, and approached his face to hers. As his hot breath crossed her cheek she gave a little shriek of terror, dropped her basket on the ground, and struggled with all her puny strength to push him away while she looked wildly up the street for help.

It was nearer than she had hoped, for as her scream rang out again, a tall figure rushed swiftly across the street, and placing two powerful hands on her assailant's shoulders, flung him violently aside. With a muttered curse the man drew his stiletto, and faced the unexpected enemy, who was a tall, powerful-looking man, with a stern, handsome face, and brilliant, dark eyes. Then his face changed, and the hand which held the stiletto dropped to his side.

"Count Paolo! Is it you again?" he stammered.

"Again—spy! the other answered, in a tone of mingled contempt and anger. He turned away with a little gesture of scorn, and looked at the girl, who had sprung to his side, and was clinging with both hands to his arm. "Courage, my child; you are safe with me," he said, and his voice softened as he spoke, and gently loosened the clinging hands from his arm.

Her persecutor sneered.

"Truly, the protection of the Count Paolo is invaluable," he said with an insulting smile. "Take care, monsieur! You have escaped the fate of your friends so far—you may not always be so fortunate."

Count Paolo did not answer, except by a slight contemptuous gesture of his hand; and the other man, with a low, ironical bow to the frightened girl, passed out of the archway, and proceeded up the street.

Angela drew a deep breath of relief. She looked up at the Count with her beautiful eyes full of an intense gratitude.

"Monsieur, how can I thank you enough?" she faltered.

The Count bowed gravely.

"I am repaid already, my child. Tell me, how came you to know that man?"

"I have only seen him three times; but he frightens me. Two days ago he followed me along the street, and spoke to me," Angela faltered. "I would not answer, and I sought shelter in a church—for I was afraid he would follow me home—and so escaped him. Then to-day he found me. I had no time to fly." She took up her basket from the ground, and looked anxiously up and down the street. "I may go now, I think? A thousand thanks, monsieur!" she added. And she bowed with a quiet courtesy which somewhat astonished Count Paolo.

He looked at her attentively.

"You are English, I think?" he said abruptly.

The girl smiled.

"Partly; my father is English, but my mother was an Italian; and I was born in England. Father is an artist," she added; and there was a note of pride in her voice which rather amused the Count.

Perhaps the girl, who was very quick-sighted, saw the gleam of amusement in his face, for she drew up her head proudly, and her eyes flashed.

"Yes, he is an artist, and a very talented artist," she said defiantly; "but, alas! he is ill. He has been very ill for some

months, and unable to work. That is the reason"—and she coloured again, and glanced down at her flowers—"why monsieur finds me thus."

The Count looked at her with a new compassion in his bright eyes.

"That is sad indeed," he said.

He spoke now in English, slowly and quietly, but perfectly correctly and with ease, and the girl's eyes brightened at the sound of her native tongue.

"To be ill in a foreign country, and among strangers! Have you any friends here, mademoiselle?"

"None; we are quite alone. Oh, monsieur, if you would——"

She clasped her hands, and looked at him with lovely, beseeching eyes.

It would have needed a colder, less impressionable heart than Paolo possessed to resist their appeal, and he smiled, and looked at her encouragingly.

"If I would—what, my child?" he said gently.

"If you would see him. He knows no one here, and it is so dull for him shut up all day alone in his room, without a creature to speak to him." The girl faltered, and her eyes filled with tears. "It would be such a treat to him to see anyone who can speak English. I am but a dull companion, and I am obliged to be out all day."

"Certainly I will come," and Paolo smiled pleasantly. "He is an artist, you say; perhaps by chance he may have some pictures for sale. Is it so?" as the sudden light of hope which flashed across the beautiful face answered this question. "Well, let us go, my child; unless, indeed, you would choose that I should call another time," he added.

"Oh no—now, please," the girl cried, and she moved hastily out of the archway into the street.

The Count followed, walking by her side down the narrow street and across a more open space, until they entered a more frequented thoroughfare. Here, once or twice, Paolo met some acquaintance, who gave him a bow and an amused glance at his companion, and once some ladies driving past in a grand carriage leant forward and looked at him curiously, and waved their hands in greeting. But Paolo was profoundly indifferent to the amused, curious glances. He walked by the side of his companion, talking to her pleasantly meanwhile, until they had left the more public thoroughfare and entered a long, evil-smelling street, which was narrow

enough to have enabled the tenants of the houses to shake hands, if it so pleased them, with their opposite neighbours out of the higher windows. The girl paused before one of these houses, hesitated, and looked scrutinisingly at her companion.

"Monsieur, my father knows nothing of this;" and she touched her basket of flowers significantly. "He believes that I teach English to the children of our doctor. You will keep my secret?"

"Certainly, my child."

There was an increased pity in the dark eyes which rested on the girl's fair, flushed face. She was so young and pretty; so unfitted to fight alone the battle of life, to walk safely among the snares and pitfalls which would certainly beset the path of one so beautiful and apparently so lonely! Paolo, who knew the world, felt his heart beat with chivalrous pity as he followed the slight figure up the broken staircase, higher and higher, till it paused before a closed door. She stood with her fingers on the handle, and looked back at him with an anxious, pathetic smile. There was a window on the opposite wall which faced the west, and a ray of golden light shot through the misty gloom of the staircase, and fell on her beautiful face and touched her soft curls with brighter gold. She put her finger warningly on her lips.

"Remember—not a word," she said hurriedly.

"I will remember, but first"—and Count Paolo put his hand lightly on her arm—"will you not tell me your name?"

"Certainly; it is Monteith—Angela Monteith," she answered, and then turned the handle and led him into the room.

Paolo looked round curiously. It was a large, bare room, almost devoid of furniture; a few studio properties, such as models, and casts, and bits of drapery, were scattered here and there; a lay figure, covered with a sheet, stood in one corner; an easel, on which was placed a gigantic canvas, occupied the centre of the room. In the window was a small stand full of bright flowers, and in one corner, stretched on a low pallet, Paolo saw the wasted figure of a tall man with a long, golden beard and an eager, haggard face.

He raised himself as the door opened, and looked eagerly and a little suspiciously at the unexpected visitor.

"Who is this, Angela?" he said, speaking in English and in a quick, irritable voice. "How often have I told you that I will not have any strangers——"

He paused as Count Paolo went forward and bowed courteously.

"Pardon this intrusion; though no artist myself I live much among artists, and I have heard of monsieur's genius," he said in his suave, high-bred voice, "and I asked permission of mademoiselle," he bowed to the young girl, who was standing just within the door, nervously twisting the ribbons of her hat, "to visit your studio."

"My studio!"

Mr. Monteith gave a short laugh, and cast a disparaging look round the room.

"Such as it is, you are welcome here, monsieur."

He paused and looked enquiringly at his visitor, who bowed gravely.

"Paolo Ostrolenka, at your service, monsieur."

"Paolo—not the Count Paolo Ostrolenka?" and Mr. Monteith raised himself and looked up eagerly.

"The same, monsieur."

"Indeed! Ah, I do feel honoured by your visit, Count; I only regret that I am unable to give you the welcome I could wish to give."

"It is already given." Again the Count bowed and smiled. "I fear the light has faded too much to allow me to see your pictures this evening, monsieur."

"I am afraid so—stay! Angela, child, draw the easel nearer to the window; turn it more to the light—yes, so. Perhaps Count Paolo may be able to form some opinion of its poor merits," he went on in a tone of proud humility which ill disguised the vanity beneath. He raised himself higher on his pillows, and looked eagerly at the Count as he advanced and took up his position before the easel. "You recognise the subject? Hypatia and her pupil."

The Count bowed gravely. He stood and looked at the picture with thoughtful, critical eyes, which fully recognised its merits and were also fully awake to its faults. The two figures—the noble Greek maiden and her pupil, the boy monk—were correctly drawn, and the faces of both were exquisitely finished, but the picture as a whole was tame and spiritless, and conveyed an impression to the spectator of being—as, indeed, it was—the work of a man worsted in the battle of life, who had given up the struggle after fame as hopeless. Some such thought passed through the Count's mind as he stood before the picture. Angela came to his side and touched his arm softly.

"It is beautiful, is it not, monsieur?"

Oh, far more beautiful than many of the pictures in the galleries which the tourists rush to see!" she said eagerly.

The Count smiled indulgently at the girl. She, at least, had perfect faith in the artist's genius—unlimited admiration and reverence for its results. Her face was all aglow with pleasure as she gazed from the picture to the Count's face, and sought with eager eyes to read there his opinion as to the merits of the picture. But Paolo's face, which could be eloquent enough at times, could also assume a perfectly impassive, inscrutable expression at will, and Angela quite failed to understand it now.

"A beautiful picture, truly," he said politely; "and the price, monsieur?"

The artist hesitated an instant, and his sunken eyes gleamed. He raised himself on his pillows, and looked eagerly at the Count.

"Three hundred guineas," he answered slowly; "that is my price."

"Three hundred guineas!"

Paolo hesitated. It was a large sum; larger than he had expected, certainly larger than he considered the picture to be worth, and also larger than he could at that time afford to give. But he could not say so with the two pair of anxious eyes fixed on his face, with the two anxious faces watching him so intently.

"Three hundred! It is a somewhat higher price than I can afford to give just at present," he began; "but," for the sudden change from hopeful expectation to despair which swept over the girl's fair face touched his kind heart, "if monsieur will trust the picture to me for a few days, I have many rich friends, and I dare say I can find a purchaser. And now," and he glanced round the bare room and the canvasses which stood with their faces turned to the wall on one side, "is there not some smaller picture—something less pretentious, which monsieur will allow me to purchase to adorn my own walls?"

"Angela, child, wake up. Show the Count my Esther, my Andromeda," the artist cried. "Make haste, the daylight is almost gone."

"Permit me."

Paolo crossed the room, and assisted Angela to move the canvasses. But neither of the paintings which Mr. Monteith had named pleased the Count's critical eyes. He caught a glimpse, however, in a corner, of a small study of a girl's head. He took it up and looked at it admiringly.

"Your portrait, mademoiselle," he said, and looked at Angela.

She smiled and blushed, and her father answered for her.

"Yes; a study—merely a study," he said disparagingly.

"A very charming study. Will monsieur allow me to purchase this, and name the price," the Count said, and his brilliant eyes looked from the picture to the fair original's face with such undisguised admiration, that Angela's blushes grew more vivid, and her heart throbbed with delight.

"Certainly, Count. The price is forty pounds, a mere bagatelle," Monteith answered with a careless assumed contempt in his voice, which was sadly contradicted by his eager eyes, by the bare room, and the signs of poverty which met the eye on every side.

Count Paolo smiled.

"Truly a mere bagatelle," he answered politely, as he took out a blank cheque from his pocket-book, and looked round for pen and ink.

Angela brought them from a table at the farther end of the room. Her eyes were smiling, her whole face seemed transformed, and the hand which took the cheque from the Count trembled with delight and eagerness.

He looked at her and smiled sympathetically.

"Perhaps a cheque will be inconvenient. Would monsieur prefer notes or gold?" he enquired.

"Oh no—no!" and Monteith's trembling fingers closed tightly over the flimsy bit of paper. "Our friend, Dr. Antonelli, will cash it for me. My daughter will take it when she goes, as usual, to-morrow, to teach the little ones."

"Then I will say good-evening."

Count Paolo held out his hand to the artist. Angela had lighted a lamp; for the daylight was fading fast, and it was almost dark in the room; and placed it on a small table near the bed. The light fell full on the artist's face, and Paolo saw more distinctly than before how worn and haggard it looked, and how grey it was with the first touch of Death's fingers. Angela, watching him intently, saw the look of compassion and surprise which passed over his face, and her own grew paler. The haunting dread against which she had closed her heart so resolutely during the last few weeks all at once assumed gigantic proportions, and refused to be banished any longer. She gave a short, stifled sob, and her hands clasped and unclasped nervously; but her emotion passed unnoticed by the two men,

who were exchanging a few words of farewell.

"I will send for the picture to-morrow, monsieur," the Count said in his deliberate, musical voice, "and you will permit me to call sometimes to enquire after your health? You must feel this solitude"—and he glanced round the room compassionately—"very irksome sometimes."

"I shall be delighted to see you. Angela, show the Count downstairs. Take care how you tread, monsieur; the stairs are old, and full of snares and pitfalls."

"I need not trouble mademoiselle," protested the Count; but Angela had already taken the lamp from the table and moved towards the door. She placed the lamp on a little bracket at the head of the staircase, and waited silently until the door had closed behind the Count, then, with a swift, impulsive movement, she sprang forward, and put her hand on his arm.

"Monsieur, you are so kind—oh, so kind! You will tell me—you do not think that he looks very ill?" she cried anxiously, and she fixed her beautiful, imploring eyes on his face.

The Count forced a smile.

"Not so ill but that with careful nursing, and nourishing food and wine, he may soon be better, I trust, my child," he answered. "You have a doctor?"

"Yes; Dr. Antonelli. He is very kind, and he says what you say—nourishing food, wine—that is all the cry! And for a month," and the beautiful proud face quivered, "all we had, every halfpenny, I earned by selling flowers! See my day's wages!" and she threw out her hand with a little tragic gesture, and showed the Count a few small coins. "How could I get nourishing food—wine with these? Now," and her face changed, and brightened, and grew so exquisitely lovely, that Count Paolo, who was an ardent lover of beauty in any form, gazed at her with delighted eyes, "thanks to you, I can get all he wants. Oh, surely," and she caught his hand and kissed it impulsively, "the Holy Mother herself sent you to me!"

The Count gave a little cynical smile. He did not believe in the efficacy of any prayers, whether to the Holy Mother or any other divinity, for he was unfortunately devoid of any religious belief whatever. All creeds and faiths, whether Catholic or Protestant, Buddhist or

Mohammedan, were alike to him; but not for worlds would he have cast a doubt on the child's innocent faith. So he smiled kindly on the sweet enthusiast and answered:

"Doubtless it was so, my child. Promise me one thing—that you will never sell flowers in the street again. You are much too young, and"—he hesitated a moment—"beautiful to be exposed to such insults as that miscreant offered you to-day. I know him well; he will not be satisfied with one repulse, he will seek you out again, and perhaps find you when"—and he gave her a gracious smile—"I am not near to protect you. So promise me you will not run the risk again."

"Monsieur, there is no need. The money which you gave me for the picture—ah, how proud I feel to know that you thought the portrait of my poor face worth purchasing"—and she smiled at him with beautiful, eloquent eyes—"will last a long time. Before it is spent my father will be able to work again, or, perhaps, you may have found a purchaser for the picture."

"Let us hope so; and now farewell, my child."

Paolo held out his hand with a kind smile. Angela took it in both her own, and with an impulsive gesture bent her head and kissed it.

"I cannot reward you, monsieur, but the blessed saints surely will," she said in a wistful voice.

Paolo smiled gravely.

"Nay, I have an angel's thanks already. That should surely be enough," he said. Then he drew his hand gently away, and, with a smile and courteous bow, descended the rickety staircase and passed into the quiet street.

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